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that says no law shall be passed that would impair the obligation of existing contracts, but Johnson says that applies to commercial contracts but historically has not applied to marriage contracts.

Either way, this would be something for the courts to decide.

Celebrate!

All right, already, enough with the cautious warnings. This is supposed to be about celebration, right? According to the new law, couples do not need to have a solemnization ceremony to create a legal domestic partnership. But many couples may choose to have a celebration before family and friends to seal the deal in a spiritual, emotional and publicly acknowledged way. Here are a few people and places to get in touch with to plan a ceremony:

Metropolitan Community Church of Portland (503-281-8868, www.mccportland.com) is excited to celebrate legal unions of same-sex couples. Assistant pastor Wes Mullins says MCC Portland has been performing commitment ceremonies for same-sex couples since it opened its doors in 1976. "Previously, we had to construct language in the ceremony that left out anything about the state or the law," said Mullins, who is gay. "For instance, it usually says, 'By the power vested in me by the state of Oregon.' Now we can say that. I think for me personally, I can get chills when I think about that."

MCC is open to members and nonmembers alike. While the space is free for members, nonmembers will pay a \$300 fee to use the sanctuary. Everyone is expected to pay a \$250 fee for the cler-

gy's time. Couples may incur additional fees between \$50 and \$100 for use of a sound technician, pianist, vocalist, kitchen, etc.

Community of Welcoming Congregations (503-665-8741, www.welcomingcongregations.org) is similarly well-versed in ceremonies for same-sex couples. "My way to do that usually is to meet with the couple and to get a sense of what their spirituality is and where they are, and we kind of create the ceremony together," said the Rev. Tara Wilkins, the organization's executive director, who married approximately 130 couples when same-sex unions were briefly legalized in Multnomah County in 2004.

"No matter how we deal with the legal side of things, there is something sacred about love," she said. "I think couples are going to want in their own way to pause and celebrate that love."

Wilkins, who married her partner, Carole Isaacks, in 1999, is a vocal proponent of marriage equality. She is organizing an Equality Sabbath for the last weekend in January. "This is for all traditions," she explained. "They'll all do different things, but what we'll ask of them is that they devote at least a portion of the worship service to equality, preferably the sermon and the prayers."

Wilkins says there is no established fee schedule for her organization's ceremonies. She does encourage couples to make a donation or offer an honorarium.

First Unitarian Church (503-228-6389, www.firstunitarianportland.org) and **First Congregational United Church of Christ** (503-228-7219, www.uccportland.org) also welcome same-sex couples to celebrate their unions. Fees at both churches range from \$100 to \$1,500 depending



on how many guests are attending and whether the couple want a reception.

Congregation Neveh Shalom (503-246-8831, www.nevehshalom.org) recently began offering Jewish ceremonies for same-sex couples who are members of the congregation. When the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement decided in August that synagogues are free to deal with same-sex unions as they see fit, senior Rabbi Daniel Isaak announced that Neveh Shalom would perform

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